

CatPanionship

a cat owner's guide

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CHAPTER 1

Basic Cat Care

Have you recently added a cat to your family? Congratulations! You'll be thrilled to have your new fur baby in your home. If you're still looking for a cat-panion please consider adopting. Browse for adoptable cats in your area by looking for a shelter near you. A purr-fect place located right here in Grand Rapids is Happy Cat Cafe.

Feeding

Purchase a high-quality, brand-name cat or kitten food. A few examples are: Blue Buffalo, Hills Science Diet, Blue Wilderness, and Tiki Cat. If you're a first time purr-ent and have any questions about food options, you can always ask your veterinarian to help you determine the best diet for your cat. Factors such as age, activity level, and health make a difference in what and how much your cat should eat. For first time purr-ents below are a few tips to know before your new cat comes home with you.

- Cats require taurine, an essential amino acid, for the heart and eye health.
- Provide fresh clean water at all times.
- Treats should be no more than 5-10% of their diet. Too many can lead to an overweight cat, which has many health risks.

Please take your cat to your veterinarian if signs of anorexia, diarrhea, vomiting, or lethargy continue for more than 2 days.

Grooming

Most cats stay relatively clean and rarely need a bath, but you should try to brush or comb your cat, if they let you. Brushing or combing your cat maybe frightening to them at first, so make sure you don't force your cat to be groomed. Slowly introduce the brush. Set the brush down so they can smell it, get to "know" the brush or comb before you dive right in. Cats take a bit to enjoy things like this, if it's not done slowly your cat can become scared of this routine, and can get spooked from the experience. Never hold down your cat, or force your cat. This will not end well.



When first introducing a brush or comb to your cat, you will want to make this a fun experience. Start by petting your cat: head down to the base of the tail. Slowly use the brush in the same manner as you would pet them. Always reward good behavior with a treat- or praise. Never yell at your cat for bad behavior, this is a scary and new thing to them. Being able to frequently brush or comb your cat helps keep their coats clean, reduces shedding, and cuts down on their hairballs.



Handling

Never pick up a cat by the scruff of their neck or by their front legs. If your cat doesn't like to be held or picked up, don't force them. This can cause fear that can be directed towards you, causing them to run and hide.

Identification

In the event your cat gets outside, without your knowledge, it is highly recommended your cat wears a safety collar with an ID tag. A safety collar has a break away panel that will allow your cat to break loose if their collar gets caught on something. For both indoor and outdoor cats, an ID tag and/or an implanted microchip, can help ensure that your cat is returned to you.

Housing

Your cat should have their own clean, dry place in your home to sleep and rest. If your cat has their own bed try lining it with a soft, warm blanket or towel. Be sure to have a space meant just for them; this is their safe space. Your cat's safe space is where they can run to and hide for safety when spooked or a place where they can retreat to relax in solidarity. Please keep your cat(s) indoors. Outdoor cats do not live as long as indoor cats. They are at risk of trauma from cars, fights with other cats, raccoons and free-roaming dogs. Outdoor cats are also more likely to become infested with fleas or ticks, as well as contact infectious diseases.



Scratching

Cats need to scratch. When a cat scratches, their old outer nail sheath is pulled off, and the sharp smooth claws underneath are exposed. Cutting your cat's nails every 2-3 weeks will keep them blunt, and less likely to harm the arms of both humans and furniture. Provide your cat(s) with a sturdy scratching post. The post should be stable so it won't wobble during use. Find posts covered with rough material such as; sisal rope, burlap, or tree bark. Many cats also enjoy cardboard scratchers. Find your cat(s) favorite type(s) by purchasing multiple posts/scratchers with different materials.





CHAPTER 2

Chatty Cat

You and your cat might speak different languages, but you can still communicate with each other. Every cat has their own meow, like humans all have different fingerprints. No two meows, chirps, trills are alike. Cats express their wants and needs through their meows and body language. Just like people, cats can also let their owners know when they are bored, irritated, sad or mad. Important clues such as the look in your cat's eyes, their tone of voice, the position of their ears, and the motion of their tails can tell you just how they are feeling. You can learn to read these signals so you'll get a good idea of what's going on in your cat's mind.

Vocalizing

You'll learn a lot when you can understand your cats chirps and meows. They'll tell you when it's time to get up; at least when they think you should, when they're feeling affectionate, and if they're feeling threatened or in pain.



Meow can mean a lot of things. Your cat may be saying "meow" to say "Hey", "More food now", "Don't touch me", or "Look what I did".

Chirps and trills are how a mother cat tells her kittens to follow her. Aimed at you, this probably means your cat wants you to follow them, usually to their food bowl. Sometimes it's because they want to show you the toy they killed, putting their mouse in their water bowl, or just because they think they have something really important to show you. If you have more than one cat, you'll often hear them converse with each other this way.

Purring is a sign of contentment, usually. Cats purr whenever they're happy, even while they're eating or sleeping. Sometimes a cat can purr when they're anxious, sick or hurt. They purr to comfort themselves, and help heal themselves. Has your cat ever cuddled with you when you're not feeling well and purred? Your cat is trying to help comfort you, and help you feel better. Cats are super sensitive to emotions, and can sense how other cats and humans are feeling based off of the energy you give off.

Yowl or howl sound like a loud drawn-out meow, this tells you that your cat is in some kind of distress, stuck somewhere, looking for you, or possibly in pain. Find your cat if they are making this noise. However, in unneutered and/or unspayed cats, these sounds are part of the mating behavior (and can become very annoying). If your cat is elderly, they may be suffering from a cognitive disorder, dementia, and may howl because they're disoriented.

Chattering, chittering or twittering are noises your cat makes when they're sitting in the window watching birds or squirrels: Cat TV. Cat-sperts think that they are trying to mimic the sounds to lure their prey in.

Body Language

Does your cat arch their back up to meet your hand when you pet them? This means they're enjoying this contact with you. Do they shrink away under your touch? Better save the pets and attention for later, they're not interested right now. Pay attention to your cat's eyes, ears, and tail-they're telling you how they are feeling, or what is to come if you don't listen to their signs. This can be in the form of body language or vocal language. Always pay attention to what your cat is telling you.

Rubbing

When your cat rubs their chin, cheeks, or body against you, they're telling you they love you. Well, sort of. They are actually marking their territory by putting their scent on you. Telling other cats or animals that you are claimed. You are their human. Don't feel so special though, they also do this with the chair, the door, their toys, basically anything they can rub their cheeks on. They are telling everyone that this is all of their stuff, including you.

Kneading

Have you seen your cat bake bread with their feet? This is something they learn from kitten hood. As kittens they would knead their mother's stomach to get milk. Thus associating this with a good experience: food. When a cat is kneading they are really happy, and purr.



CHAPTER 3

Health

By spaying or neutering your cat, you'll help control the cat homelessness crisis. With fixing your cat you can make sure that they aren't getting pregnant. Or getting another cat pregnant, if they get out of your home. There are medical and behavioral benefits to spaying (female) and neutering (male) cats. This goes for both the cats you take into your home, and also for feral cats in your neighborhood; TNR: Trap-Neuter-Return.

Spay and Neuter

The medical benefits of spaying helps prevent uterine infections and breast tumors, which are malignant or cancerous in about 90% of cats. Spaying your cat before her first heat offers the best protection from these diseases. Neutering your cat prevents testicular cancer and some prostate problems. Behavioral benefits include; female cats won't go into heat. While cycles can vary, female cats usually go into heat 4-5 days every 3 weeks during the breeding season. In an effort to advertise for mates, they'll yowl and may urinate more frequently- sometimes all over the house. Your male cat maybe better behaved. Unneutered cats are more likely to mark their territory by spraying strong-smelling urine all over the house.

Spaying/neutering your cat(s) is also highly cost-effective. The cost of your cats spay/ neuter surgery will be far less than the cost of having to care for a litter. When your cat is as young as 8 weeks old it is ideal to get them spayed/neutered. This is the earliest age that you can get them fixed.

This is done before they hit 6 months. In animal shelters, surgery is often performed at this time so that kittens can be fixed before they are adopted.

In an effort to avoid the start of urine spraying and eliminate the chance for pregnancy, it's advised to schedule the surgery before your cat reaches 5 months of age. It is possible to spay your female cat when she is in heat. Talk to your veterinarian to determine the best time to spay or neuter your cat.





T.N.R

Trap-Neuter-Return, otherwise known as T.N.R, is a program where outdoor (feral) cats are humanely trapped, spayed or neutered, vaccinated, ear tipped and returned to the location where they were found. Colony caretakers provide food, water, and shelter as necessary. T.N.R is the most humane and effective method for stabilizing and eventually reducing outdoor cat populations. Left unsterilized, the feral cats and their kittens would continue to reproduce, potentially introducing thousands of homeless cats into the communities.

Common Diseases

As a cat parent, it is important to know these common illnesses so that your cat can see your veterinarian right away. They are scary to think about happening to your fur baby, but it is important to be aware of these.

Cancer:

Is a class of diseases where cells grow uncontrollably, invade surrounding tissue and may spread to other areas of the body. Just like people, cats can get various kinds of cancer. The disease can be localized; tumor, or generalized; spread throughout the body.

Diabetes:

In cats this is a complex disease caused by either lack of the hormone insulin or an inadequate response to insulin. After a cat eats, their digestive system breaks food down into various components, including glucose- which is carried into their cells by insulin. When a cat does not produce insulin or cannot utilize it normally, their blood sugar levels elevated. The result is hyperglycemia: and excess of glucose, which if left untreated, can cause many complicated health problems for your cat.

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV):

Cats may not show symptoms until years after their initial infection occurred. Although the virus is slow-acting, a cat's immune system is severely weakened once the disease takes hold. This makes the cat susceptible to various secondary infections. Infected cats receiving supportive medical care and kept in a stress-free, indoor environment can live relatively comfortable lives for months to years before the disease reaches its chronic stages.

Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV): is a transmittable RNA; ribonucleic acid, a nucleic acid is present in all living cells. (Its principal role is to act as a messenger carrying instructions from DNA for controlling the synthesis of proteins), a retrovirus that can severely inhibit a cat's immune system. It is one of the most commonly diagnosed causes of disease and death in domestic cats. The virus doesn't always manifest symptoms right away. Any new cat entering a household- and any sick cat- should be tested for FeLV.

High-Rise Syndrome:

Many cat parents love to open their windows for their cats when the weather starts to get warmer. Unfortunately, unscreened windows pose a real danger to cats, who fall out of them so often that the veterinary profession has a name for the complaint: High-Rise Syndrome. Be sure to always keep an eye on your cat when ever you have your windows open.

Rabies:

Is a viral disease that affects the brain and spinal cord of all mammals, including cats, dogs, and humans. There's a good reason that the very word evokes fear in people. Once symptoms appear, rabies is close to 100% fatal. You can avoid this by taking your cat in to get their year check-up, and get their rabies vaccine when the time is due.



Upper Respiratory Infections:

Involve a cat's nose, throat, and sinus area. It is susceptible to infections caused by a variety of viruses and bacteria.

Worms:

Cats can acquire a variety of intestinal parasites, including some that are commonly referred to as "worms." Infections on intestinal worms can cause a variety of symptoms. Sometimes cats demonstrate few to no outward signs of infection, and the infestation can go undetected despite being a potentially serious health problem. Some feline parasitic worms are hazards for human health as well.

If you fear that your cat may have one of these common illnesses, please contact your veterinarian as soon as possible to get your cat looked over.

CHAPTER 4

Painful Truth About Declawing

People mistakenly believe that declawing their cat is a harmless “quick fix” for unwanted scratching. They don’t realize that declawing can make a cat less likely to use their litter-box and more likely to bite. Declawing also causes lasting physical problems for your cat. Many countries have banned declawing. The Humane Society of the United States opposes declawing except in the rare cases when it is necessary for medical purposes, such as, the removal of cancerous nail bed tumors.

Why Cats Scratch

Scratching is normal cat behavior. It is not done to destroy your favorite chair or to get even with you. Cats scratch to remove the dead sheaths from their claws, mark territory, and to stretch their muscles. Cats are usually 8 weeks old when they begin scratching. That's the ideal time to train kittens to use a scratching post, and begin nail trimmings. Cat owners should never consider declawing as a routine prevention for unwanted scratching. Declawing can actually lead to an entirely different set of behavior problems that will be worse than shredding your favorite couch. Too often, people think that declawing is a simple surgery that removes a cat's nails- the equivalent of having your fingernails trimmed. Sadly, this is far from the truth.



Declawing involves amputation of the last bone of each toe. If performed on humans, it would be like cutting off each finger at the last knuckle. It is an unnecessary surgery that provides no medical benefit to your cat. Educated cat parents can easily train their cats to use their claws in a manner that allows everyone in the house to live together happily.

There are two methods of declawing one is, amputation with a scalpel or guillotine clipper. The wounds are closed with stitches or surgical glue, and the feet are bandaged. Another method is laser surgery, in which a small, intense beam of light cuts through tissue by heating and vaporizing it.

However, it's still the amputation of the last toe bone of the cat and carries with it the same long-term risks of lameness and behavioral problems as does declawing with scalpels or clippers. Again if performed on a human, declawing would be like cutting off each finger at the last knuckle.

Medical drawbacks to declawing include pain in the paw, infection, tissue necrosis (tissue death), lameness, and back pain. Removing claws changes the way a cat's foot meets the ground and can cause pain similar to wearing an uncomfortable pair of shoes. There can also be regrowth of improperly removed claws, nerve damage, and bone spurs.

TIPS FOR UNWANTED SCRATCHING

- Keep their claws trimmed to minimize damage to household items.
- Provide stable scratching posts and/or boards around your home.
- Ask your veterinarian about soft plastic caps like Soft Paws.
- Attach a special tape, like Sticky Paws, to furniture to deter your cat from unwanted scratching.
- Don't subject your cat to unnecessary procedures. Declawing should be reserved only for those rare cases in which a cat has a medical problem that would warrant such surgery.

Trimming Your Cat's Claws

Trimming your cat's claws every few weeks is an important part of maintaining your cat's health. A quick trim protects you, your cat, and your family too. Nail trimming is a fast and effective alternative to declawing, which stated before, involves surgical amputation and can cause behavioral and health issues. If the idea of trimming your cat's claws has you biting your nails, know that all it takes is one patience and a bit of practice.

There are plenty of tools available to trim your cat's claws; use the one that works best for you and your cat. Some people prefer a special pair of scissors modified to hold a cat's claw in place. Whatever your tool, be sure the blade remains sharp; the blunt pressure from dull blades may hurt your cat and cause the nail to split or bleed. Keep something on hand to stop bleeding, such as styptic powder, cornstarch, or a dry bar of soap (to rub the bleeding nail across).

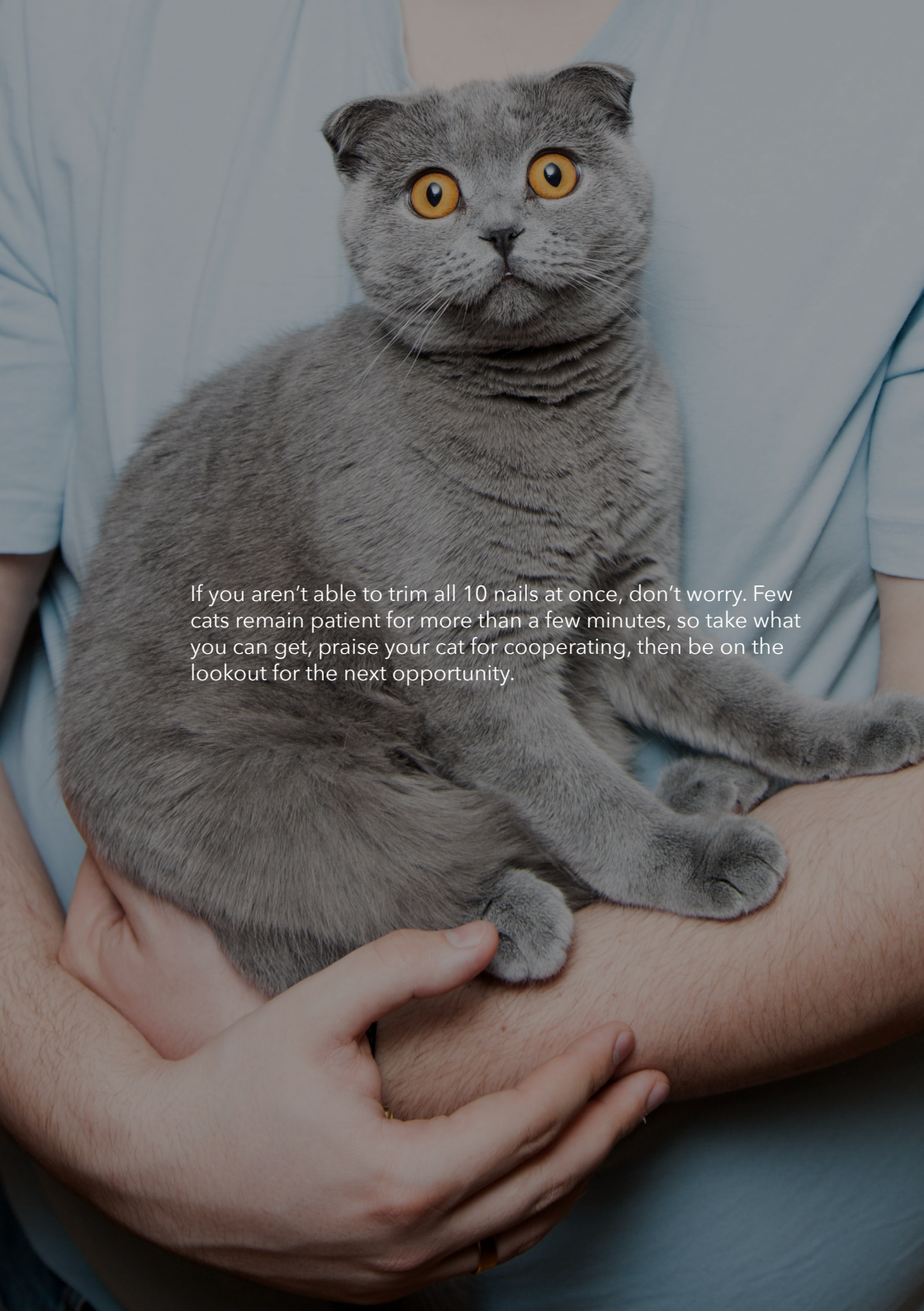


Place your cat on a table and lift one paw at a time. You may even be able to convince a particularly sociable cat to like back in your lap. If you've got a helper, now's their time to shine: ask them to hold your cat while you clip their nails, or just ask them to scratch your cats favorite spot or offer up a distracting treat.

Once you're in position and the cat's in position, put the claw in the right position too. Take a paw in your hand and use your thumb and pointer finger to gently press down on the top and bottom of the paw. This will cause the claw to extend so you can quickly but carefully snip off the sharp tip and no more.

If you approach your cat with a sharp object in one hand while trying to grab a paw with the other, odds are you'll come up empty handed. This is because there is no perfect way to handle a cat while trimming their claws.

Some cats do well with no restraint at all, but most cats need to be held firmly but gently to make sure that no one gets hurt. Try resting your cat in the crook of one arm while holding one paw with the other hand.



If you aren't able to trim all 10 nails at once, don't worry. Few cats remain patient for more than a few minutes, so take what you can get, praise your cat for cooperating, then be on the lookout for the next opportunity.

CHAPTER 5

Tips For A Happy Cat

It's a myth that going outside is a requirement for your cat to be truly happy. Playing regularly with your cat and providing them with entertaining toys can easily satisfy their stalking instinct, keep them simulated, and provide the exercise they need to stay healthy and happy.

[Here are some tips to keep your cat happy!](#)

Good Fences = Happy Kitties

Provide a screened porch for your cat to experience the outdoors safely. Consider building or purchasing a "catio" or similar enclosure to allow your cat to get a taste of the outside without risks. A regular fence may not prevent other animals from entering your yard, so you should always be present when/if you allow your cat outside in your yard. Be sure to cat-proof the yard by checking that your fence has no escape routes and by making toxic plants, garden chemicals, and other dangerous objects inaccessible.

Start'em Young

Kittens who are kept indoors are usually happy to stay indoors as they grow up.

Hang Out

Install a perch indoors near a sunny window. Another option is an enclosure that sits in a window frame (much like an air conditioning unit) and provide a secure space in which your kitty can hang out. Larger perches can attach to the side of a house or ground-floor apartment patio.

Cat Tree

Buy a cat tree; kitty condo, or make your own. A cat tree can be short, or may stretch from floor to ceiling. It provides great climbing opportunities and, in a multi-cat home, creates more play and rest areas by taking advantage of vertical space. If you can, locate the cat tree next to a window so your cat can watch the action outdoors, Cat TV.





Walks

If you live in a peaceful neighborhood in which you can walk without encountering loose dogs, consider buying a harness and training your cat to walk on a leash. This training takes time and patience, for both you and your cats. It's easiest when your cat is young. Some cats can even be harnessed and tied to a stationary object to enjoy the outdoors while you are gardening nearby (but be sure to never leave your cat alone while they are tethered).

Play Time

Play with your cat each day. Try different types of toys that allow your cat to stalk, chase, pounce, and kick. When you've tired out your cat, store toys that could harm them (such as toys with strings) out of reach. When you can't be there to supervise, leave out toys that won't possibly harm your cat without supervision. Be sure to switch the toys from time to time so that they seem "new" and more interesting to your cat. They can get bored too.

Bring The Outdoors In

Plant cat grass in indoor pots so your kitties can graze.

Clean House

Cats can be neat freaks, so scoop their litter-box once to every other day.

ID, Please

Even indoor cats should still have a collar and visible identification. The occasional open window or door offers a tempting opportunity for your cat. Your cat may become frightened and make their way outside if strangers come to work on your home. The collar and visible ID could help someone get your cat back to you.

Chip For Safety

For extra insurance, consider having your cat microchipped and keep your contact information with the microchip registry up to date.



CHAPTER 6

Introducing Cats

Wouldn't it be nice if all it took to introduce a new cat to your resident pet were a brief handshake and a couple of "hello, my name is..."? But, since we're dealing with cats, not people, it's just not that simple. You can't force your pets to like each other. There is not a crystal ball to predict whether or not your pets will be friends, but there are techniques that will increase your chances of success. Most importantly, try to choose a cat with similar personality and activity levels to your current cat. An older cat might not appreciate the hyperness of a kitten. Go slow during the introduction process to increase your chances for success. Don't throw your cats together in a sink-or-swim situation and just hope they'll work it out. That's a recipe for disaster.

Territorial In Nature

Cats are territorial, and in general they don't like to share. A cat who's unhappy about a newcomer may express their displeasure by fighting with the new cat and marking their territory (peeing on the floor, wall, or objects). Cats also dislike change, and a new cat in the house is a huge change. These two character traits mean you could have a tough (but not impossible) road ahead. Some cats are more social than others. An 8-year-old cat who has never been around other animals may never learn to share territory (and their people) with other cats. But, an 8-week-old kitten weaned from their mum and their litter mates for the first time might be glad to have a new cat-panion.

All of this means that your current cat and your new cat need to be introduced very slowly so they can get used to one another before a face-to-face meeting. Slow introductions help prevent fearful or aggressive behavior from developing. There are some tips to help make the introduction go smoothly. The introduction process can take anywhere from a few days to a few weeks, or even a few months in extreme cases. Be patient.

Some fearful behaviors are acceptable and normal. For example, most cats will feel insecure or frightened in a new environment. Often, your cat will hide for a day or two when introduced to a new home. Sometimes a traumatic experience- such as taking them to the vet or bringing a new animal into the home- can disrupt their routine and send them under the bed for a few days. But some cats are so fearful that they seem to live in a near-constant state of anxiety, or they may redirect their fear into aggression towards people or other cats.

Good Impression Tips

Confinement

Allow time for the new cat to adjust to you and their new situation, keep them in a room with their litter-box, food, water, scratching post, toys, and a bed for several days to a week. Feed your resident cat and the new cat on each side of the door to this room, so that they associate something enjoyable; eating, with each other's smell. Don't put the food so close to the door that the cats are to upset by each others presence to eat. Gradually move the dishes closer to the door until your cats can eat calmly while standing directly on either side of the door. Try to get your cats to interact with a toy. Tie a toy to each end of a string, then place it so the toy is on either side of the door. Hopefully, they'll start batting the toys around and maybe even batting paws. Be sure to spend plenty of time with your new kitty in their room, but don't ignore your resident cat



Hiding

If your cat is hiding but healthy, leave them alone. Your cat will come out when they are ready. Forcing them out of their hiding spot will only make them more fearful. Make sure they have easy access to food, water, and a litter-box. Clean the litter-box and change their food and water everyday so you know they are eating and drinking. Food is a good motivator for cats, so if yours is afraid of someone in the house, give that person feeding duty.

Slow And Steady

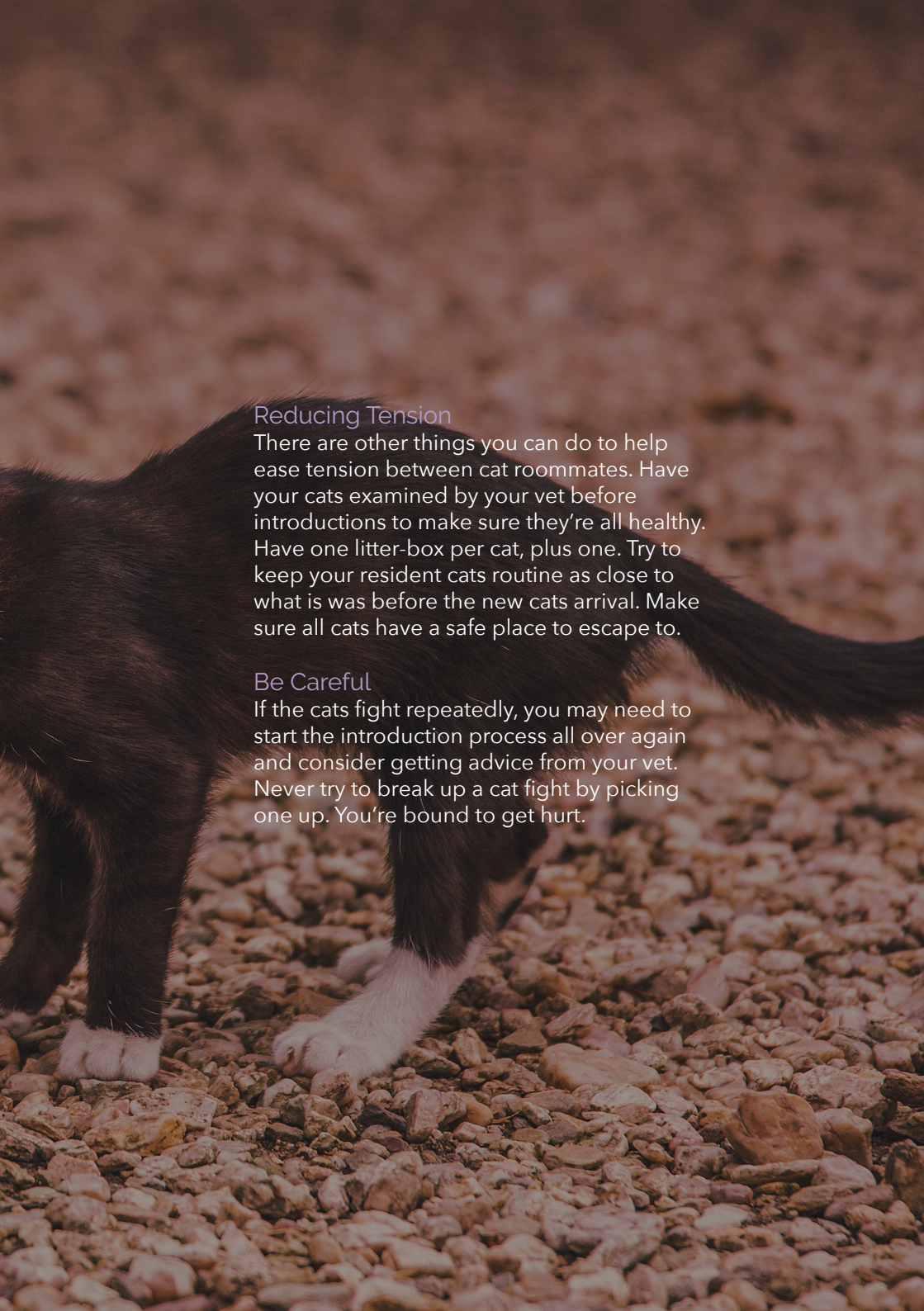
It's better to introduce your cats to each other gradually so that neither cat becomes afraid or aggressive. Once the cats are face-to-face, though, there will be some kinks for them to work out. When lucky, your cats may do some mutual sniffing and grooming, and you're on your way to success. They may sit and stare at each other. You can provide a distraction by dangling toys in front of them at the same time. This may encourage them to play together.

They might sniff each other, hiss, and walk away. That's to be expected. This may go on for a few days or so, and you'll probably find them both napping on your bed.

Stopping Conflict

If you're not so lucky, they may be very stressed. They may only posture and make a lot of noise. But, as soon as there are signs of increasing aggression (flattened ears, growling, spitting, and crouching) make a loud noise by clapping your hands. If the standoff continues, very carefully move them into separate parts of the house to calm them down. This could take up to 24 hours, and the cats may take their stress out on you.



A black and white cat is walking across a surface of light-colored gravel. The cat's body is mostly black, with white paws and a white patch on its chest. The background is a soft, out-of-focus brownish-grey. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Reducing Tension

There are other things you can do to help ease tension between cat roommates. Have your cats examined by your vet before introductions to make sure they're all healthy. Have one litter-box per cat, plus one. Try to keep your resident cats routine as close to what it was before the new cats arrival. Make sure all cats have a safe place to escape to.

Be Careful

If the cats fight repeatedly, you may need to start the introduction process all over again and consider getting advice from your vet. Never try to break up a cat fight by picking one up. You're bound to get hurt.

Scaredy Cat

Every cat is different, so each is frightened by different things. Every cat has their own way of responding to fear. A naturally timid cat may be afraid of many things and spend a lot of their life in hiding, while a naturally confident cat will be less fearful, and will usually recover more quickly from scary events. For example, one cat may confront a strange dog by hissing, spitting, and puffing out their fur to make themselves look big. Or they may decide to cut their losses and beat a hasty retreat. Some cats are so overwhelmed with fear that they simply freeze, too terrified to run. A really laid-back cat, on the other hand, may not see the dog as a threat; they may simply sniff the dog and walk away.

Scaredy Cat Behaviors:

- Running away
- Hiding
- Aggression (which includes spitting, hissing, growling, swatting, scratching, puffing fur and tail, arching back, swishing tail, and flattening ears)
- Freezing in place
- Losing control of bladder
- Refusing to use litter-box



CHAPTER 7

Behavior Issues

Some cats just won't give peace a chance. There are several reasons that cats might not along. The most common is a lack of good experiences with other cats early in life. If your cat grew up as an only cat, with little or no contact with other cats, they may react when they are introduced to another cat because they're afraid, they lack cat social skills, and/or dislike disruption to their routine and environment. Cats tend to prefer consistency over change. This is especially true if the change involves a newcomer to your cat's established territory. Cats are a territorial species. While some cats overlap their territories a great deal, others prefer to keep a good distance from their neighbors.

Two unrelated males or two unrelated females may have a particularly hard time sharing spaces. In some cases, cats get along just fine until something scary or unpleasant, (like fireworks or the odor of the veterinary clinic) becomes associated with the other cat. In other cases, relationships change as the cats mature. If one cat reaches the age of 1-3 years, and then trouble brews, social maturation may be a factor.

Types of Aggression

Any sudden change in your cat's behavior could be an indication of an underlying medical condition. If you notice any unusual physical or behavioral symptoms, or if your cat stops eating, please see your veterinarian right away.

Maternal Aggression

A female cat with a litter of kittens may hiss, growl, chase, swat or try to bite another cat who approaches, even one they were once friendly with. Maternal aggression usually subsides once the kittens are weaned. It's a good idea to spay/neuter maternally aggressive cats to prevent future litters, and aggression problems.

Play Aggression

It's common for kittens and young cats to engage in rough, active play because all cat play consists of mock aggression. Cats stalk, chase, sneak, pounce, swat, kick, scratch, ambush, attack, and bite each other- all in good fun. If they're playing, it's reciprocal. They change rolls frequently. Their ears are typically forward in play, their claws maybe out but they don't cause damage, and their bodies lean forward, not back.



Tips For Aggressive Cats

- Never let the cats fight it out. Cats don't resolve their issues through fighting, and the fighting usually just gets worse. Interrupt aggression with a loud clap or a spray of water from a squirt bottle.
- Spay/neuter your cats. Males that are not neutered are prone to aggressive behavior.
- Separate their resources. Reduce competition between cats by providing multiple food bowls, beds, and litter-boxes in different areas of your home.
- Provide additional perches. More hiding spots and perches will allow your cats to space themselves out.
- Don't try to calm down your aggressive cat. Leave the cats alone and give them space. If you come too close, they could turn their aggression towards you.
- Reward desired behavior. Praise or give treats to reward your cats when you see them interacting friendly.
- Try pheromones. You can purchase a product that mimics a natural order (which humans can't smell), that may reduce tension. Use a diffuser while the aggression issue is being resolved.

Aggression Between Friends

Separate your cats in different rooms for several days or weeks, with separate beds, food bowls, and litter-boxes. This way they can hear and smell each other, but don't have to be face-to-face. Place the food bowls on opposite sides of the door. This will encourage them to be close together while they're doing something that makes them happy. Eating!



Each day, have the cats switch rooms so that they both experience some variation and get access to each other's scents. You may need an assistant to do this safely. After several days, if both your cats appear relaxed, crack the door open one inch. If they remain calm, open the door a bit more, then a bit more. If the cats remain relaxed, they may be ready to be together again. If they react with any signs of aggressive behavior- such as growling, spitting, hissing, swatting, etc. Separate them again and follow the introduction instructions in chapter 6.





Aggression between Cat-nimes

Start by separating your cats as described before for a longer period of time, and reintroduce them at a much slower pace, like several days to a few weeks. Instead of simply opening the door to reintroduce the cats, provide daily introduction sessions that very gradually move the cats closer and closer together under supervision.

During the sessions, you might find it easier to control your cats with harnesses and leashes, or by confining one or both of your cats in crates. During the sessions, keep both cats distracted with food or play. Start out with them far apart. Keep the sessions short. Make it easy for them to succeed. Separate your cats between reintroduction sessions to prevent a relapse.

When your cats can peacefully eat and play within a couple feet of each other should they be left alone together unsupervised. Trust them only for short periods together at first, and increase their times together gradually. If needed behavioral medication may be helpful in reintroducing a domineering cat's aggression, and a skittish cat's fear. Making the reintroduction go more smoothly and quickly.

Still Can't Get Along?

Don't hesitate to contact your veterinarian, they can evaluate the problem and help you manage or resolve the conflict between your cats. Some cats simply cannot live together peacefully.

Since chronic stress and tension isn't healthy for you or your cats, rather than force them to suffer years of stressful coexistence, it may be more humane to keep them permanently separated in the house or find another home for one of them.

CHAPTER 8

Litter-Box Problems

At least 10% of all cats develop elimination problems. Some stop using the litter-box altogether. Some only use their boxes for urination or defecation, but not for both. Still others eliminate both in and out of their litter-boxes. Elimination problems can develop as a result of conflict between multiple cats in a home, dislike for the litter-box type, or the litter itself, a past medical condition, or the cat deciding they don't like the location, or the placement of the litter-box. Once a cat avoids their litter-box for whatever reason, their avoidance can become a chronic problem, because the cat can develop a surface or location preference for elimination.

The best approach to dealing with these problems is to prevent them before they happen by making your cat's litter-boxes as cat-friendly as possible. It is important that you pay close attention to your cat's elimination habits so that you can identify problems in the making. If your cat does eliminate outside their litter-box, you must act quickly to resolve the problem before they develop a strong preference for eliminating in an unacceptable surfaces or in an unacceptable areas.

Litter-Box Management Problems

If your cat isn't comfortable with their litter-box or can't easily access it, they probably won't use it. The following common litter-box problems might cause them to eliminate outside of their box.

- You haven't cleaned your cat's litter-box often or thoroughly enough.
- There are not enough litter-boxes in your home. Be sure to have a litter-box for each of your cat's, plus one.
- The litter-box is too small.
- Your cat can not easily get to their litter-box at all times.
- The litter-box has a hood or liner that makes them uncomfortable.
- The litter in your cat's box is too deep. Cats usually prefer 1-2 inches of litter.





Preference

Some cats develop a preference for eliminating on certain surfaces or textures like carpet, clothing, or bedding. This is something that happens when your cat feels uncomfortable in their litter-box. This can be because of a health issue.

See your vet right away to rule out a possible UTI.



Litter Preference

As predators who hunt at night, cats have a sensitive senses of smell. These sensitivities can also influence a cat's reaction to their litter. Cats who have grown accustomed to a certain litter might decide that they dislike the smell or feel of a different litter. When this happens offer them the opposite of what you were once using. An example would be, if using scented litter, try an unscented litter.

Inability To Use Litter-Box

Senior cats; starting at the age of 11 years-old, cats or cats with physical limitations may have a difficult time using certain types of litter-boxes such as top-entry boxes, or litter-boxes with high sides. Use a litter-box that your cat is most comfortable with to avoid accidents.

Negative Association

There are many reasons why a cat who has reliably used their litter-box in the past starts to eliminate outside the box. One common reason is that something happened to upset them while they were using the litter-box. If this is the case with your cat, you might notice that they seem hesitant to return to the box. They may enter the box, but then leave very quickly-sometimes before using the litter-box.

Another common cause for this is painful elimination. If your cat had a medical condition that causes pain when eliminating, they may have learned to associate the discomfort with using their litter-box. Even if your cat's health has returned to normal, that association may still cause them to avoid the litter-box.

Stress

Stress can cause litter-box-problems. Cats can be stressed by events that their owners may not think as traumatic. Changes in things that even indirectly affect the cat, like moving, adding new animals, or family members to your household- even changing your daily routine- can make your cat feel anxious.

Multi-Cat Household

Sometimes one or more cats in a household control access to litter-boxes and prevents the other cats from using them. Even if one of the cats isn't actually confronting the other cats in the litter-box, any conflict between cats in the household can create enough stress to cause litter-box problems.





CHAPTER 9

Inappropriate Elimination

Urine Marking

Urine marking is a problem that most cat owners consider a litter-box problem since it involves elimination outside the box, but the cause and treatment are entirely different from other litter-box problems and therefore it is considered a rule out. A cat who urine marks will regularly eliminate in their litter-box, but will also deposit urine in other locations, usually on vertical surfaces. When marking, they'll usually back up to a vertical object like a chair, wall, or speaker. They will stand their body erect and their tail extended straight up in the air, and spray urine onto the surface. Often their tail will twitch while they're spraying.

Resolving A Litter-Box Problem

The first step in resolving elimination outside the litter-box is to rule out urine marking and medical problems. Have your cat checked thoroughly by a veterinarian.

Once your vet determines that your cat doesn't have a medical condition or issue, try following these tips!

- Provide enough litter-boxes. Remember one litter-box per cat, plus one.
- Place litter-boxes in accessible locations.
- Remove covers and liners from litter-boxes.
- Let your cat choose their litter.
- Clean accidents with an enzymatic cleanser



Medical

Feline Interstitial Cystitis

This is a neurological disease that affects a cat's bladder. Cats with cystitis; inflamed bladder, will attempt to urinate frequently and may look as if they are straining, but with little success.

They may lick themselves where they urinate, and they may have blood in their urine. Feline interstitial cystitis can cause a cat to eliminate outside their box, but this is only because of the increased urgency to urinate. This is because of the pain involved in urination. Feline interstitial cystitis is very serious and can be life-threatening to the cat. It must be treated immediately by a veterinarian.

Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)

If your cat frequently enters their litter-box and seems to produce only a small amount of urine, they may have a urinary tract infection. See your veterinarian to rule out this possible medical problem.

Kidney Stones Or Blockage

If your cat has kidney stones or a blockage, they may frequently enter their litter-box. They may also experience pain and meow or cry when trying to eliminate. Their abdomen may be tender to the touch.

What Not To Do

Regardless of what you do to solve your cat's elimination problems, here are a few things to avoid.

- Rubbing your cat's nose in their urine.
- Scolding your cat or carrying, and/or dragging them to the litter-box.
- Confining your cat to a small room with their litter-box, without trying to resolve the elimination problem.
- Clean up accidents with an ammonia-based cleaner. Urine contains ammonia, and cleaning with an ammonia cleaner may attract your cat to the same spot.



